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The Grauer School

Safety Measure or PR Stunt: The 12 Hour TikTok Ban

By Ezri R.

In the days leading up to January 18th, social media descended into chaos. Influencers spilled their deepest secrets, and millions scrambled to back up their TikTok drafts, obliterating their phone storage. When the app finally shut down that evening, most users accepted their fate—no one expected it to return just a few hours later. Low and behold, the next morning, TikTok was miraculously back, greeting users with an unexpected message:

“Welcome back! Thanks for your patience and support,” the message read. “As a result of President Trump’s efforts, TikTok is back in the U.S.!”

A bold claim, considering that at the time, Trump was still President-elect and, more importantly, had been at the forefront of the charge to ban the app in the first place. Yet, before he had even set

foot in the White House, TikTok credited him with its revival. The message raised more than a few eyebrows.

“Thank you, Trump!” trended on X (formerly known as Twitter), boosting his favorability among younger voters. But was this a heroic rescue—or an expertly staged PR move? Details about the ban were murky from the start, with most updates coming from viral posts rather than official sources. Even Trump added to the confusion, first calling TikTok a “national emergency,” then delaying the ban because, in his words, “I got to use it.”

So, what was the real motive? A legitimate national security measure? A Supreme Court effort to protect America’s youth from data harvesting? Or a carefully orchestrated stunt—one that whipped up panic, let it simmer for 12 hours, then delivered a triumphant comeback just in time

to win points with Gen Z?

It wouldn’t be the first time younger voters felt used in political games. With the average senator’s age steadily increasing, decisions about technology and education often feel detached from those most affected. Maybe this whole debacle was designed to manufacture a crisis that Gen Z would care about—only to “solve” it in a way that boosted approval ratings. The oddly specific TikTok welcome message, the platform’s CEO appearing at Trump’s inauguration, and TikTok reposting pro-Trump content all boost suspicion.

Of course, some politicians genuinely seemed concerned about data privacy, and the risks of foreign-owned platforms aren’t imaginary. But with all the theatrics surrounding this ban, one thing is certain: Whatever the truth is, we’re not getting it in a 60-second TikTok.

Wicked: Defying Gravity and Expectations

By Adele F.

The 2024 version of *Wicked*, directed by Jon M. Chu, soars to new cinematic heights as the iconic Broadway sensation is transformed into a visually stunning experience. The film reveals the untold backstory of Elphaba and Glinda, the witches of Oz, offering a thought-provoking take on friendship, prejudice, and the concept of good versus evil.

Cynthia Erivo plays Elphaba with a tenderness and strength that makes the green-skinned misunderstood witch real. Her vocals, especially in “Defying Gravity,” really steal the show from the first note until the last. Equally captivating is

Ariana Grande’s Glinda, who balances the bubblyness with moments of depth when her character shows her insecurities. Combined, Erivo and Grande create a chemistry that brings their characters’ friendship to life in heartbreaking ways.



The visuals in this film are simply breathtaking. The impressive landscapes of Oz, with equally amazing costumes and intricate set design, put the audience into another world of wonder. From the icon-

ic “Popular” to the intensity of “Defying Gravity,” audiences hum their tunes well out of the theaters.

Critics and fans alike have praised *Wicked*. On Rotten Tomatoes, it has an 88% approval rating, with many praising Chu for being able to be true to the source material while exploring new creative possibilities. It’s not only a resonant fantasy epic but also a deeply human story of identity, acceptance, and gray morality.

Wicked is, of course, a triumph. Be it for a long-time fan of the musical or new to this story, this adaptation is an unforgettable journey of magic, heart, and soul. It is a must-watch that will surely make one believe in the power of friendship and guts to be different.

After the Flames

By Adele F.

Natural disasters leave behind scars that may take years, sometimes decades, to heal. The recent Los Angeles fires, starting from January 7, 2025, are a real reminder of how such incidents affect not only people but also the economy and society as a whole. The effects of these fires range from economic strain to personal tragedy, aside from the immediate destruction.



The economic damage wrought by the LA fires is enormous. Early estimates put insured losses above \$20 billion, while total economic damages could reach as high as \$50 billion, making it one of the costliest natural disasters in the U.S. These figures are not only in the loss of homes and infrastructures but also in indirect impacts to local economies. For instance, small businesses are hugely affected when

both the customers and employees are out of town for evacuation. And the financial burden is only growing worse at the local and state levels of government. Los Angeles County estimates property tax revenue will plunge as many of the burned properties lose a large portion of their value. Meanwhile, costs related to firefighting, disaster relief, and infrastructure repair mount. Federal and state aid will offset some of those costs, but long-term budget shortfalls are unavoidable—which could impact everything from public services.

The fires worsen California's existing housing crisis. As more homes get destroyed, the meager housing supply in the state becomes even meager, causing increased rent and higher property values. Insurance rates go higher as well, and with a spike in that rate, people don't even get to rebuild anymore, just completely leaving their property behind. This sets an especially bad precedent for communities with high affordable housing needs.

Tens of thousands have been forced to flee their homes due to the blazes. The wildfires displaced over 179,000 residents—many of whom lost homes and per-

sonal property. Rebuilding will take years; for some, recovery will never fully come.

Besides financial loss, the emotional impact of these fires is great, with many survivors victims of long-term mental health issues, including PTSD. Counseling and community outreach programs will be important in helping people to rebuild their lives. Besides the destruction of homes and infrastructure, the fires have burned hundreds of thousands of acres of forest, releasing massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This not only contributes to climate change but also worsens air quality, leading to respiratory issues for residents across the region.

As Los Angeles begins the long process of recovery, rebuilding will involve much more than physical reconstruction. Coordinated efforts at all levels of government, the private sector, and community groups will be necessary to address the economic, emotional, and environmental impacts of this disaster.

In return, it offers the city an avenue to come out stronger than everbefore through sustainable recovery and support for all types of residents equitably.

Don't You Dare Ruin the Ending!

By Adele F.

We all know that one person who will always spoil the ending of a story. To what lengths would you go to keep their mouths shut? Would you want to scream at them? Or maybe even...stab them?

I know that I get easily frustrated with this, and have often felt it necessary to punish family or friends by ignoring them for a couple of minutes. This does raise the question of, what would you do?

A Russian scientist named Sergey Savitsky in the Antarctic allegedly stabbed his colleague who would repeatedly ruin the endings of the books he was reading. Both were stationed in the South Shetland Islands, where sometimes the sun doesn't rise for days, and sources of enjoyment can be scarce. Sergey loved to use literature as

a way to pass the time while working at the Bellingshausen Station, often borrowing books from the outpost library. His colleague, Oleg Beloguzov, repeatedly made it harder for Savitsky to enjoy his reading, always sharing how the stories would come to an end. This made Sergey frustrated to no end.

The two had been working together for many years, but at some point, Savitsky had reached his last straw. The two had an argument about Beloguzov's habit of ruining the ending, that ended dramatically when Savitsky stabbed his colleague. Beloguzov was flown to Chile to get medical help, and Savitsky promptly admitted to the incident and turned himself in to his commander, but claimed that he nev-



er meant to kill him. Savitsky was kept in a church for ten days before returning to Russia to await trial.

Despite the drama, all seems to have ended well, as Beloguzov made a full recovery and Savitsky now has access to a wider variety of literature, even though he is facing criminal charges. This incident does make me wonder though, what would you do if someone kept ruining the ending for you, and how quickly could it escalate?

Does Pretty Privilege Get You Away With Murder?

By Luke W.

How can one gain sympathy for the murder? One way is through their appearances. Throughout history, we have seen numerous examples of people charged with murder gain sympathy. Infamous killers like Ted Bundy, The Mendez Brothers, and now Luigi Mangione have all managed to amass support despite being accused of murder. Murder is the act of taking someone's life, the ripple effect it leaves is just as devastating. A child might no longer have a parent, or someone no longer has a best friend. In a few cases, murderers somehow gain support. Some murders gain support purely from looks. This is a phenomenon called "pretty privilege."

In modern times, there have been multiple instances of "pretty privilege." The serial killer Ted Bundy was one to use his attractive appearance to his advantage. Bundy pleaded guilty to the killing of thirty individuals. Throughout the trial, many claimed he used his looks to lure people into his traps. There was also a group that believed a man with the looks of Ted Bundy could not have hurt a soul.

The Menendez Brothers Trial is

another recent example of "pretty privilege" gathering support. The Mendez Brothers murdered both their parents in their home in Beverly Hills, California. The brothers appeared well put together when tried. They both were very prestigious figures and recognizable. People believed that people who originated from the upper class could not have been the ones to commit this crime. Although they both were sentenced to life without parole, many people believed that had validity to their claims, purely based on looks.



The most recent example of this occurred on December 4, 2024. The streets of New York were busy as United HealthCare CEO Brain Thompson was walking outside the New York Midtown Hilton. As he was walking, a mysterious figure emerged and shot him dead, then fled the scene. A suspect

who looked like the killer was arrested five days later in a McDonald's in Pennsylvania. The shooter's face was revealed to the world using a CCTV camera. It was revealed that the shooter was quite attractive in most people's opinions. Overnight, the killing of the United HealthCare sent a sensational wave of content through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and Facebook. Through this trend, many people found sympathy for the suspected killer, Luigi Mangione, just due to his looks. It was impossible to go on social media without getting "Health Care CEO Killer" content. The videos ranged from edits of him to videos claiming he was innocent. Edits of Luigi being escorted to prison compared him to DC's iconic character, Superman, went viral. This sent a concerning call to individuals across the country. The trend #freelugi began circulating on all social media, appearing on every trending tab. This murder was the first time in recent history to gain so much history purely from social media. How can one gather so much support for murder? This case concerns Americans for the future as we enter a more complex future, with social media and AI and how it can alter public opinion around issues.

AI to Attack?

By Zack H.

A rented Cyber Truck arrived Wednesday morning in Las Vegas around seven thirty and was in flames and exploded about an hour later. Pulling into a hotel and exploding all within fifteen seconds. Some claimed it was a terrorist attack when it first hit the media. But what makes this attack interesting is it wasn't a terrorist, but rather a member of the U.S. Army. Matthew Livelsberger had served nineteen years as a Green Beret with many combat deployments including Ukraine, Afghanistan, and a lot of other countries. Sadly despite his service Livelsberger had struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

Law enforcement has claimed he used ChatGPT to plan this attack, researching the amount of explosives he'd need, how to buy a phone without providing information, and where to buy fireworks. We all understand AI can be used with good intent and can be very helpful, but now, this poses the question: is AI going to become a threat, being misused to plan attacks?

Initially, many thought the suicide was an attack involving political beliefs but the media claims "Livelsberger had no animosity toward President-elect Donald Trump." It was later found out that Livelsberger had suffered potential post-traumatic issues from being deployed. It is reported that "Livelsberger did not have a

criminal history. He was not on the radar of the FBI or the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department before the explosion". This makes me curious about Livelsberger's intent behind this attack, but further research shows it was later found out that the highly rewarded soldier wasn't exactly attacking but rather a suicide bombing. Found in his phone were notes saying that Livelsberger thought he was being followed and watched. We don't know if Livelsberger was telling the truth or was paranoid from his service, but it is becoming more widely certain of the mental taxes serving in the Military is causing, with a significant increase in veterans who have served that are suffering from mental health issues.

Trump's Arctic Ambition: The Greenland Gambit

By Leyton G.

Greenland is 836,300 square miles, with a population of 56,865. It is an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark. However, there has been a recent interest in Greenland.



With Donald Trump's recent triumph in the 2024 U.S. during The Presidential Election, he has taken a recent interest in Greenland. Trump's reasoning to make Greenland a part of the U.S. is mainly for strategic reasons and resources. Greenland is abundant with

minerals such as zinc, lead, gold, iron ore, heavy and light rare earth elements, copper and oil. Trump believes that if Greenland becomes a part of the U.S. it would not only be beneficial for the U.S. in terms of strategy, but beneficial economically due to the abundant minerals.

Although many U.S. and Greenland citizens have been extremely surprised by Trump's statements about purchasing Greenland, this is not the first time this scenario has come up. The U.S. has made several attempts to purchase Greenland from Denmark. The first attempt dates all the way back to 1867, when U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward successfully negotiated Alaska from the Russian Empire. Seward then thought of purchasing both Iceland and Greenland for \$5.5 million dollars in gold. The proposal was almost finalized, however it was never passed.

The second time that the U.S. attempted to purchase Greenland was in 1946. In 1946, U.S. Secretary of State

James Byrne created a proposal to purchase Greenland. During 1946, the U.S. believed that Greenland and Iceland were 2 of the 3 most essential international locations for U.S. military bases at the time. In Byrne's proposal he offered Denmark 100 million dollars. His proposal was rejected for four reasons: Danish Sovereignty, Strategic and Economic Importance, a shift in International Normality, and Post-War Relations. Fast forward to modern day, there is still an immense amount of interest in Greenland. Recent President elect, Donald Trump, has expressed his interest in Greenland publicly during his first term as president in 2019.

It seems that his interest in Greenland has only become more significant since his victory in the recent election. He believes that acquiring Greenland would be vital to America's National Security. Denmark, which governs Greenland, firmly rejected the idea. They firmly stated that "Greenland is not for sale."

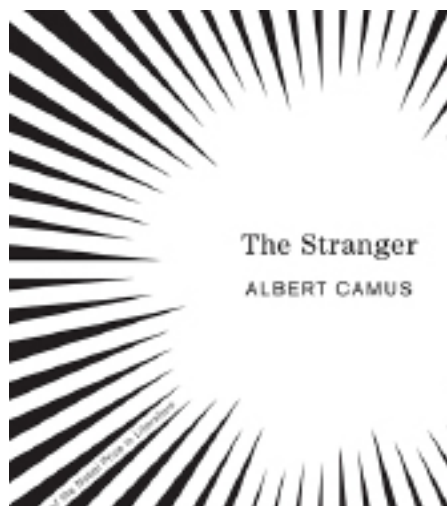
Shelf Talk: The Stranger

By MJ C.

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* is more than a novel, it takes an unsettling and confrontational look at life and its meaning, or lack thereof. Through the main character, Meursault, Camus creates a narrative that is stark and deeply reflective of life's realities. Meursault's life is marked by an odd calm, making him an intriguing character that the readers can never get enough of. He is a man that does not cry at his mother's funeral and accepts his fate without a fight. Yet it is in this indifference that the novel gains its power. It challenges the readers to play with the idea of meaning, or the absence of meaning.

The Stranger reflects ideas of existentialism, in other words, a philosophical belief that each individual is responsible for creating purpose in our own lives.

This book is well loved by its readers for Meursault being portrayed as both distant and relatable, alien but achingly human.



He does not rebel against unfairness or hold onto false hope. Instead he observes, he exists, and he accepts. During his trial, society's desperate need to force meaning onto his actions becomes clear. And imposes meaning where he believes none is needed.

What does Meursault stand for? Perhaps nothing. And in that nothingness lies the freedom to see life not as one believes it to be, be as it is. Camus challenges us to face the intensity of existence, to confront emptiness, and, just as Meursault, to appreciate the raw, uncomplicated beauty of the present moment. *The Stranger* is a must-read that performs a quiet and subtle rebellion, a tragic yet bright reflection, and an invitation to truly live.

Return on Investment: The Value of a College Degree

By Brandon D.

Is College Worth It?

In the modern education ecosystem, graduating from high school and moving forth into college seems to be a rite of passage; you must go to college to get a good job, so we have been told. However, with the costs to attend most institutions rampantly increasing, growing by roughly 30-40% in the past 20 years when adjusted for inflation, roughly 29% of Americans do not believe college is worth the investment. With these concerns in mind, will a college degree actually result in a net profit?

Return on Investment (ROI)

An interesting metric to observe while discussing this dilemma is return on investment (ROI), which measures the net financial gain or loss directly as a result of earning a college degree over the course of a full career. Specifically, ROI represents the difference between the lifetime earnings of a person with a degree and the total costs associated with obtaining the degree (including tuition, fees, and living expenses). While it is not a faultless measurement, it provides compelling, albeit surface-level, insight into whether college is worth the investment. The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity (FREOPP) calculated the ROI of over 40,000 college degrees from institutions throughout the nation.



To simplify the data further, we will only observe bachelors degrees from colleges in California and assume students begin college at the age of 18, graduate in four years on time, and work from the ages 23 to 64, covering a 42 year career span.

Sorting the data from worst to best ROI, we find that 333 degrees from Californian universities result in a negative ROI, with the top three lowest being Visual and Performing Arts at San Francisco Art Institute (\$-1,120,118), Fine and Studio Arts at California Institute of the Arts (\$-1,023,962), and Music at California Institute of the Arts (\$-1,016,876).

Generally, the most common degrees with negative ROI were music, fine arts, theater, film, philosophy/religion, and anthropology. 1284 degrees yielded positive ROIs, with 369 degrees resulting in a ROI above \$1,000,000, with the three highest

being Electrical, Electronics and Communication Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley (\$7,254,618), Computer and Information Sciences at the California Institute of Technology (\$7,034,506), and Mechanical Engineering at the California Institute of Technology (\$6,374,169). Common degrees with high ROIs include most engineering fields, computer science, nursing, and accounting/business. The average return on investment from college degrees in California was roughly \$565,256.

What Does This Tell Us?

This article is not to say that the only way to make money in life is to obtain an engineering degree at Caltech and that any type of arts degree will result in losing millions throughout your career. ROI only provides us with a single financial perspective on the value of a bachelor's degree. Ultimately, an individual's success depends more on how the degree is utilized in combination with the application of other skills, networking, discipline, and perseverance. Depending on your goals in life, it may be worth considering the ROI among other factors, such as the quality of education at your prospective college, to make an informed decision on whether to pursue college or immediately build work experience following your high school graduation.



Trendsetters in the Hallways: The Impact of Fashion on Teen Identity

By Luke M.

In high school, fashion is a huge deal for teenagers. It's not just about wearing clothes. It's about showing who they are and fitting in with their friends. From the latest shoe trends to unique thrift store finds, what they wear can say a lot about their personalities and where they stand in the social scene. Walking through the school hallways, you can feel the pressure to look good and keep up with trends, and it can seriously boost confidence or make teenagers feel out of place. Fashion plays a big role in teens' lives, influencing how they see themselves and how others see them while they're trying to figure out who they really are.

At Grauer, when you walk the halls, you might notice a lot of the same clothes. A sweatshirt, jeans, and Uggs. Many students opt for this comfortable, casual look because it aligns with many trends while staying in the comfort zone. However, if you take a closer look, you can find a handful of students using fashion as a canvas to express themselves—the paint being their clothes. Whether chait's a vintage band t-shirt, brightly colored shoes, or

a lot of patterns and textures, these unique choices reflect their personalities and confidence.

For some students, fashion can become a way to break the status quo. It takes a certain level of courage to wear something that doesn't necessarily fit in with the majority.



Those who decide to stand out often inspire others to embrace their own style, which demonstrates that it's okay to be different, and that in fact, you should be different. Fashion at Grauer isn't just about the clothes themselves, it's also about how students wear them. Confidence plays a big role in how outfits are perceived. Those who wear their clothing with pride often

draw attention, encouraging peers to explore their own fashion choices. A student who confidently wears a bold outfit can make a statement that resonates with others, motivating them to express themselves more freely.

In addition, the diversity in fashion at Grauer can spark conversation and connections among students. When someone wears a unique piece, like a jersey or ripped tights, it can serve as an icebreaker, leading to discussions about personal interests. This provides a sense of community and encourages students to appreciate different backgrounds and perspectives that each individual brings to the table.

While many students at Grauer dress the same, there's a vibrant undercurrent of individuality that shines through. Fashion becomes a powerful tool for self-expression, allowing students to showcase their individuality. So next time you walk through the halls, take a moment and really look at all the different styles Grauer has to offer. Embracing individuality in fashion not only improves our environment, but also empowers each of us to be our true selves.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

By Zoe Br.



Martin Luther King Jr. Day was first celebrated on his birthday, January 15, in 1969. The day became a national

holiday on November 2, 1983, when President Ronald Reagan—somewhat reluctantly—signed it into law. President Reagan was quoted saying, “...those 39 short years (have) changed America forever.” The day was a joyous one, and many prominent figures who opposed President Reagan took a break from criticizing him as the nation reflected on the change Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. had made. Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Reverend King's widow, was chairman of the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday Commission which Congress created in 1984 to plan the first observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This national holiday, however, was not first observed

until three years after it was signed into law, on January 20, 1986. It took until the year 2000 for all 50 states to recognize the day. Several states had—and continue to—combine the holiday with others including “Civil Rights Day” and “Robert E. Lee Day.” Martin Luther King Jr. Day is held annually on the third Monday in January, as that Monday always falls around his birthday. President Bill Clinton signed the King Holiday and Service Act on August 23rd, 1994. This encouraged people to make the holiday a, as Congressman John Lewis put it, “day on, not a day off.” It is designed to be a day for serving the community with the aim of bettering the world.

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New Year's Resolutions: Why Are They Worth It?

By Chiara C.

Are you the type of person who vows to eat healthier, lose weight, or exercise more at the start of a new year? Have you ever wondered where the idea of a New Year's resolution even comes from? Well you are in the right place.



In the next few minutes, I will convince you why you should put your best foot forward, and make the commitment to hit that restart button at the beginning of the year, and make things happen for yourself. Why? Because it's worth it! At the very least, you'll gain an understanding of the roots of

this idea of a restart, and how for centuries, humanity has invested in the idea of starting over with goals for self improvement or new goals for success in a new year.

New Year's resolutions have their roots in the ancient world. The Babylonians, a society which thrived nearly 4,000 years ago, are said to have been the first to make New Year's resolutions. They also held big celebrations in honor of the New Year. It is said that these traditions have stood the test of time through the centuries and from land to land because humanity believes in this notion of a restart of goals with the New Year. Fast forward to the present, where we celebrate and commit to resolutions just as the ancient world did thousands of years ago. It's pretty amazing that this tradition that dates back to the ancients still exists.

Today, a majority of Americans say that they intend on making New Year's resolutions. The key to making our resolutions happen is to commit to manageable and realistic goals - this way you know it's

worth it to give it your best! The reality is you can achieve any goal if you break it down into achievable milestones. If you want to lose weight, instead of setting a goal of losing 50 pounds, how about 5 pounds to start? This is much more realistic, and you can stay motivated throughout the year as you ratchet up your goal. If your goal is to save money, the best approach to make this happen is to look at your daily spending habits and start small. Maybe you can forgo that Starbucks chai latte and cheese danish, and save at least \$10 a day? This can really add up! If you skip Starbucks three times a week, that can amount to \$120 per month in savings. That equates to \$1,440 of potential savings in a year! You can use that money to go on a weekend trip to a fun place, or buy some stocks that can pay you dividends. Making goals that are attainable is truly the key to successfully achieving your resolution goals, and totally worth making the commitment! Let's keep this tradition going, and enjoy the feeling of achievement with realistic goals.

Are New Year's Resolutions Worth It?

By Zoe Ba.

I am sure you have all heard of New Year's Resolutions. If you have not, here is a quick overview of what they are: A New Year's Resolution is a promise to do something better or different in the new year. Normally these resolutions are centered around self-improvement or aspirations people hold for themselves. In theory, these resolutions are good because they are how we reflect on ourselves and the things we wish to improve. Oftentimes, these resolutions are too extreme and result in burn out.

Studies from Ohio State University state that 23% of people quit their new year resolutions within the first week and around 43% quit before the end of January. Only around 9% of Americans who make New Year's Resolutions actually achieve them. Although a lack of motivation is often the reasoning behind why people fail

to carry out their resolutions, I believe it has more to do with the goals themselves. Instead of choosing a resolution that takes time to achieve and overwhelms you, make smaller goals that will inevitably help you reach this goal. What if instead of having "New Year's Resolutions" we had "New Month's Resolutions"? These resolutions would focus more on goals that can be achieved within that month. Breaking down your larger resolution down to bite sized goals could be the difference between achieving them and burning out in the first week.

For example, if your goal was to exercise regularly, jumping from going to the gym zero days a week to five days a week might be daunting. This new addition to your schedule could become too strange and you will be left frustrated. Instead it might be easier to say, "For the month of

January, I am going to make it a habit to go to the gym once a week". Then when it becomes February, adding one additional day might not be as stressful. Everyone has their own approach to achieving their goals, if you have a New Year's Resolution, maybe try breaking it down if you are feeling overwhelmed.



Thrifting Culture: Its Rise to Fame

By Clay B.

In recent years, thrifting has transformed from a modest, budget-friendly shopping habit into a celebrated movement in the fashion world. Fueled by a growing commitment to sustainability, thrifting has not only revived decades-old fashion trends but also reshaped the way people view second-hand shopping. What was once a pastime associated with embarrassment has now become a cultural statement, thanks to the rise of thrift culture.



The “big three” thrift store chains—Goodwill, The Salvation Army, and Value Village, are household names. Some of these chains even serve communities in towns such as Encinitas. These organizations began in the last century and a half, with The Salvation Army founded in the mid-1800s and Goodwill following shortly after. Value Village, on the other hand, appeared in the mid-1900s. All three started as charity-based movements aimed at supporting the less fortunate in America. Thrift stores became a lifeline for lower-income communities, providing both essential goods and affordable options that allowed people to pursue more personal shopping choices, instead of receiving impersonal charity. Additionally, thrift stores

have long offered job opportunities, contributing to a system of sustainability that benefits both the planet and the population.

2020: A Thrift Renaissance

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns of 2020 gave rise to new habits and interests. With many people stuck at home, the influence of social media grew immensely, giving rise to new trends in fashion and culture. Amid this global uncertainty, Gen Z—already a generation known for its online engagement—found an outlet in thrifting. As they looked for unique, one-of-a-kind items, thrifting offered a sense of nostalgia and individuality. Whether it was a ‘90s bomber jacket or a Y2K purse, thrifting became a way to reconnect with the past while staying on trend.

The movement went viral, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where hashtags like #thrifthflip (where users repurpose or upcycle second-hand items) and #thriftstorefinds gained massive popularity. As these trends spread, thrifting became a badge of honor. Younger generations saw it as an opportunity to express their individuality, while also participating in a cultural conversation about sustainability. The phrase “Yeah, I thrifted it” became a conversation starter, an entrance to creative communities.

Thrifting as a Luxury?

However, this rise in popularity brought unintended consequences. As thrifting became a mainstream activity,

its original purpose—providing affordable clothing and essentials to those in need—was sometimes overshadowed by a new, luxury twist. Certain “trendy” items began to be hoarded by fashion-savvy shoppers looking for the most obscure and vintage finds. For example, the baby tee—a cropped, tighter-fitting shirt originally designed for children—became a hot commodity. The more unique and rare the design, the more valuable the shirt became, but not in the way it was originally intended.

This shift led to growing concerns as valuable items like winter coats and children’s clothing started being resold at higher prices on platforms like eBay and Poshmark, defeating the purpose of thrifting as a means of affordable shopping. As a result, thrift stores, which had once served as a resource for the less fortunate, began to be viewed by some as places to acquire “luxury” fashion rather than basic necessities.

A Return to Compassion

As we move into 2025, many consumers are becoming more mindful of thrifting’s roots and are returning to a more compassionate approach. The affordability and sustainability that originally drew many to thrift shopping remain key motivators, especially for young shoppers. In the end, thrifting’s growing popularity among younger generations has not only given them a wider array of fashion choices but also helped to redefine the cultural landscape, encouraging individuals to shop mindfully, sustainably, and with greater awareness of their impact on the world.

Creative Writing Corner

By Zoe Ba.

Are you interested in delving deeper into your love for writing? Look no further than the Creative Writing Club. Here you will be given the resources required to make your writing flourish and improve. Each week, there will be a short mini-lesson tailored to what you want to learn about. The Creative Writing Club

aims to support you and your needs, therefore, if there is something you’ve been itching to learn about, pitch it to Co-Presidents Zoe Baxter and Beatrix Monday-Yankus and they will work to include it in the program. Many people assume that the Creative Writing Club focuses solely on the fictional aspect of writing, these people would be wrong, if you want to learn more

about writing articles or research essays we would be happy to help. This club is open to all grades (both Middle School and High School). We alternate between hosting club meetings on Fridays after school until 2:30 and Friday’s during lunch. If you want to learn more details, please shoot an email to zuebaxter@grauerschool.com or beatrixmondayyankus@grauerschool.com.

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Queer Queen and Quadg0d

By Zoe Br.

Figure Skating is one of those sports that only piques national interest every four years. However, with the Winter Olympics just around the corner and the shifts on the leaderboard since the 2021-2022 season, now is an opportune time for casual U.S. fans to start paying attention again.

The sport found the spotlight in the 2022 Beijing Olympics, thanks to copious amounts of drama around Women's Singles. People remember the Russian scandals: the doping of a 15-year-old, the silver medalist's mental breakdown, and the surprising winner. These were the three girls sent to represent the Russian Olympic Committee in China. Each one was capable of quad jumps, essentially otherwise unheard of in women's skating. Despite banning Russia from international competitions in March of 2022, the International Skating Union (ISU) has ruled to allow one competitor from each discipline in the 2026 Olympics. This will definitely result in a dramatic 2025-2026 Russian season.

Why should American fans pay attention to the 2024-2025 season? We're winning. The Grand Prix Final (GPF)—one of the biggest competitions of the season—was held in December and out of four senior disciplines, Team U.S.A. won three. Madison Chock and Evan Bates took gold

in Ice Dance. The couple had previously placed fourth at the 2022 Olympics. Amber Glenn's all-around victories left her in a very comfortable first place. She has been undefeated this season, beating three-time World Champion Kaori Sakamoto. Ilia Malinin was soundly in first place after the Short Program and, despite taking second place in the Free Skate, finished approximately ten points above silver medalist Yuma Kagiyama. This marks a one-year winning streak since Malinin won the 2023 GPF. Additionally, the Junior Men's gold went to Jacob Sanchez of Team U.S.A.

Senior women's singles figure skaters are often 16 to 22. At 25, Glenn is considered kind of old for the sport. However, she has been working each season to get to where she is now and just keeps improving. Two seasons ago, she was consistently missing her triple axel (3A) attempts. Last season, it seemed she was capable of either a 3A or an otherwise clean program. This season, Glenn has been landing each of her 3A attempts successfully. She is the first openly queer U.S. women's figure skater and is an avid mental health awareness supporter.

Quad jumps typically involve four rotations: a quad axel (4A) has four and a half. It was deemed impossible, then a 17-year-old attempted in his Free Skate... and landed it. Malinin is still the only skat-

er to land a 4A in competition. He had a phenomenal junior career in which he set highest-score records which have yet to be broken, even three years later. In 2022 he was almost sent to the Olympics, a decision that—like much of the sport—caused controversy.



In the seasons since he has won Skate America—which is part of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating—three times. Malinin is the current World Champion, having set two records at the event. At the 2024 GPF, he attempted all six types of quad jumps and seven quads total, another record.

Obviously, the biggest thing to be looking forward to is the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy. However, that is far from the only exciting event. The next big events this season are the European Figure Skating Championships and the Four Continents Figure Skating Championships. Then, in March, the World Championships will occur in Boston, Massachusetts.

Op-Ed: Why Does Hollywood Recycle the Same 5 People?

By Ezri R.

New movie announcements are everywhere—spend five minutes on TikTok, and you'll hear about Christopher Nolan tackling The Odyssey or Emerald Fennell's Wuthering Heights. Naturally, my first thought is always: Who's in it? Who are the fresh, up-and-coming actors stepping into the spotlight?

Apparently... no one.

Don't get me wrong—I love Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi (I've seen Priscilla an embarrassing number of times and will die on the hill that Babylon was

robbed). But as Catherine and Heathcliff? Really?

Setting aside the fact that neither of them looks remotely pre-21st century (search: iPhone face), there's also the small issue of Elordi, a conventionally attractive white man, playing a “dark-skinned” and “ethnic” character. Meanwhile, Robbie—who is 33—is set to play a teenager. Maybe Fennell is aiming for a modern take, or maybe it's just Hollywood prioritizing star power over a faithful adaptation. Either way, longtime fans of Wuthering Heights are side-eyeing this casting choice.

And it's not just Fennell. The Odyssey's newly announced cast—Tom Holland, Anne Hathaway, Zendaya, Robert Pattinson—is full of actors I adore. But does every major film have to feature the same rotating list of A-listers? A Christopher Nolan epic doesn't need big names to sell tickets. He could cast a dozen new names we've never heard before and people would still line up in droves at the box office.

So why not take a risk and introduce the next generation of stars instead of reusing the same five people?

Hope's Hiding Places

By Raphi Afra

Hope is a lantern in the fog,
A glow faint but not weak.
It asks for nothing,
but gives everything
a hand to hold,
a reason to rise.

It lives in the cracks of broken things,
in the beating of hearts that won't stop
living
Even when skies darken,

When rain drowns us
It arrives
soft and chaotic.

Hope is the voice
that whispers in the silence
It is a seed that waits,
And helps

It lingers in the laughter of humans,
in the hearts of us

who stand when we could fall.
Hope doesn't promise ease,
but it promises possibility.

And sometimes,
that is enough.

Old Love! Little Love!

By Koa Barton

Old love! Little love!
Will you not lay me to rest with a kiss?
A life so long lived in toil and tears,
Will it be much to ask to be so missed?
Days end in sleep and nights of fears,
Must I now lay so alone, so dismissed?
Old love! Little love!
Where days of youth melt into nights of
age,

The comfort of memories now becomes
my quilt.
Turn now-to what was before-turn the
page.
Remember what it was that made our
small world tilt.
Your mind remains so hateful in that cage.
Old love! Little love!
May we now join hands as you recall,

Those days of youth and love and pain?
Must you still forget, no, keep them all.
Kiss me now and may our love remain.
Old love! Little love!
The night shall now steal me away,
Must you leave to not remember, to not
wait?
Old love! I see it now, your way.
Little love! Days of love forgotten in hate.

Fireflies

By Clay B.

I never thought I'd see fireflies
sparks of matter reminding me I exist
why
they only exist in my eyes
for a second
the only way they can be
seen is light
the light of drone
even when closer or
quite literally in the midst of it all,
I slum with regret
I don't know what for
I haven't known for a while.

The Grauer Gazette Team



The Star Samara

By Zoe Br.

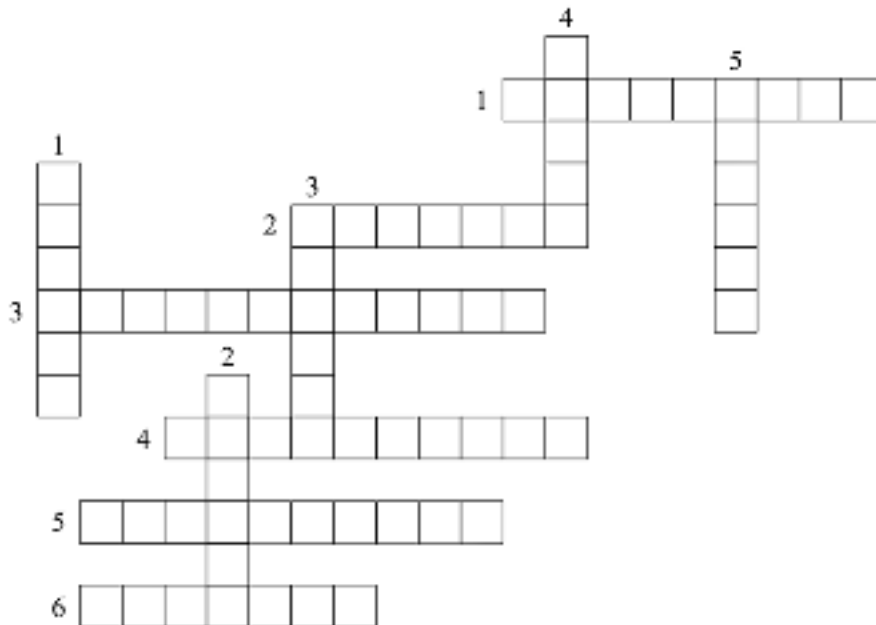
This season, Grauer's one and only Samara Diggs surpassed a thousand points AND rebounds in her basketball career. We can't wait to see where she is going! Reaching these thousand-point mark-

ers has been a result of Samara's hard work, determination, and skill. She is encouraging to her team on and off the court and she has always been a steady presence in the Grauer athletic community.



The Grauer Gazette Crossword

By Zoe Br.



Across

1. Pixar movie whose sequel was the most popular movie of 2024
2. Reached 99 Grammy nominations this year
3. Won best new artist at the Grammys
4. *The Lion King* sequel, *Mufasa*, is what kind of film
5. In a legal dispute with Justin Baldoni
6. Recently engaged

Down

1. Her song "That's So True" reached Top 10 on the Billboard Hot 100
2. Movie musical
3. Creates music with her brother
4. Got kicked out of the Grammys
5. One of the teams playing in the Superbowl

ENCINITAS, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH, 2025

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